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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD NEIGHBORHOODS ORGANIZING THEIR OWN
SECURITY

Classified By: Pol Couns Robert Ford, reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Since the attack last week on the Shia mosque in Samarra, district advisory councils (DACs) chairman in two Sunni Arab districts within the city have told PolOff of how neighborhoods are organizing to protect themselves against attacks by Shia militias. Separately, another political contact from a third neighborhood told us that his neighborhood also has organized self-defense watches. These sources all stated that confidence in government forces and organizations is minimal, these sources stated. END SUMMARY.

MILITIAS ARE INVADING THE NEIGHBORHOODS

¶2. (C) On March 2 at a meeting of members of the Baghdad City Council, two chairmen of DACs within the City of Baghdad told PolOff of recent problems in their districts. Dr. Jafar Al-Ali, Chairman of Al-Mansour DAC, and Ziad Al-Tarik, Chairman of the Al-Rusafa DAC, both said their areas were threatened by Shia militias. Dr. Jafar said members of the Al-Mahdi Army were moving into his district to seize various homes and other unoccupied property. Ziad claimed members of both the Al-Mahdi Army and Badr Brigade were entering his district to intimidate and kill. Both men reported to PolOff their neighborhoods in their districts had started to respond to the threats by taking security into their own hands.

RESIDENTS READY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES

¶3. (C) During the week of February 23 to March 2 residents of neighborhoods in Al-Mansour had started living on the roofs at night. PolOff asked if that action was taken for safety reasons. Jafar al-Ali responded that residents were doing this to observe their streets and shoot at any militias, terrorists, or insurgents entering their neighborhoods. Meanwhile, according to Ziad, recently-armed militias had started moving uninterrupted into the borders of the Al-Rusafa District. Ziad said these militias were trying to control his district and selected neighborhoods. Ziad asserted the actions of the militias would be unsuccessful because district residents are prepared to patrol their own neighborhoods and take security matters into their own hands. Both gentlemen told PolOff it was no use contacting members of the army or police as they were probably associated with the insurgents, terrorists, or militias.

¶4. (C) Separately, an Iraqi who works quietly with the Anglican Church here told us privately on February 24 that in his neighborhood of Zayuna, in east Baghdad, residents

cooperate in organizing overnight shifts to protect themselves against Shia militias, especially the Mahdi Army. He said that each street in the mixed Sunni-Shia-Christian district of Zayuna has 5-6 groups that take turns on watch. If they see gunmen they do not recognize, they fire "warning shots" and if the gunmen do not turn around, orders are to "shoot to kill." He said residents would not trust the police because they are thought to be agents of SCIRI and the Badr Corps.

COMMENT

15. (C) All the above sources are credible. These and other contacts among the Baghdad's once-confident Sunni Arab community describe that community as very apprehensive now; other communities are too. Worry about the credibility of the security forces is not new; we have been hearing complaints for months. What is new is the more frequent anecdotal reporting we hear about neighborhoods organizing their own armed neighborhood watch teams. At the same time, in these times of highly publicized stories of men in black appearing in neighborhoods, the fears of our contacts may be excessive to the relative threat. That said, in the end, it is the perceptions that drive the Sunnis' fears.
SATTERFIELD